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ABSTRACT

A research study was conducted (1) to investigate the effects of sex and gender of discloser, and sex of the interaction partner on self-disclosure reports and behaviors, in particular the dimensions of intimacy and control; and (2) to investigate the relationships between self-report and behavioral measures of disclosure and the impact of sex and gender on those relationships. Participants included 102 males and 194 females in a basic interpersonal communication course at a large eastern university. Participants were asked to complete the Bem Sex Role Inventory, a 21-item self-disclosure questionnaire, and the control subscale of the Wheeless disclosure measure, and participated in an acquaintance exercise. Data produced a significant sex by sex of partner interaction effect for intimacy. Results were consistent with previous research indicating more reported disclosure to same-sex than to opposite-sex targets. In the behavioral study, females disclosed more intimately than males. There were no significant results for self-report and behavioral control of intimacy. Correlations between self-report and behavioral measures for the total sample were not significant, but sex and gender of respondent affected those relationships, particularly for the intimacy dimension. (Author/HOD)

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The Effects of Sex and Gender on Self-Reported and Behavioral Intimacy and Control of Self-Disclosure

Rebecca J. Cline

Abstract

The purpose of this research was (1) to investigate the effects of sex and gender of discloser, and sex of the interaction partner on self-disclosure reports and behaviors, in particular the dimensions of intimacy and control, and (2) to investigate the relationships between self-report and behavioral measures of disclosure (i.e. validity), and the impact of sex and gender on those relationships. The 296 participants in the studies completed the Bem Sex Role Inventory, a 21-item Self-Disclosure Questionnaire, and the control subscale of the Wheeless disclosure measure, and participated in the Davis Acquaintance Exercise. Data from the self-report study produced a significant sex by sex of partner interaction effect for intimacy. Results are consistent with previous research indicating more reported disclosure to same-sex than to opposite-sex targets. In the behavioral study, females disclosed more intimately than males. There were no significant results for self-reported and behavioral control of intimacy. Correlations between self-report and behavioral measures for the total sample were not significant, but sex and gender of respondent affected those relationships, particularly for the intimacy dimension.

The Effects of Sex and Gender on Self-Reported and Behavioral Intimacy and Control of Self-Disclosure

Cumulative evidence on sex differences in human communication compels the following conclusion: sex is an important determinant of communication behavior.[1] More than 130 published studies have addressed sex and gender issues relative to self-disclosure. Issues researched include the effects of sex of discloser, sex of target or interaction partner, and the interaction of these on self-disclosure, factors mediating the effects of sex, sex differences in the perceptions and attributions accorded disclosure, differences in how the sexes are perceived when they disclose, and the relationship of sex to the validity of self-disclosure measures. The majority of that research has failed to yield clear conclusions, particularly with regard to the effects of the sex of discloser on disclosure. The purposes of the present study are (1) to investigate the effects of sex and gender of discloser, and sex of the interaction partner, on self-disciosure reports and behaviors, in particular the dimensions of intimacy and control, and (2) to investigate the relationships between self-report and behavioral measures of disclosure and the impact of sex and gender on those relationships.

THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING SEX AND SELF-DISCLOSURE

The importance of understanding the links between sex and gender and self-disclosure is rooted in two sources: clinical theory and practice and relational development theory and research. The concept of self-disclosure (used here interchangeably with other terms, such as verbal and social accessibility) developed out of clinical interests. Rickers-Ovsiankina defined social accessibility as an "openness to communicate with the outside world."[2] Concurrent to her work, a group of social workers arrived at a similar concept: verbal

accessibility.[3] All of these researchers were interested in what professional helpers could do to make clients more "accessible to treatment." Jourard, whose name is most closely associated with the concept of self-disclosure because of his prolific work, defined self-disclosure as "the process of making the self known to others."[4] Jourard developed a new perspective on therapy; he assumed that self-disclosure was necessary to achieving mental health and that most clients' problems were the result of a lack of self-disclosure in their lives.[5] For Jourard, self-disclosure was a symptom of mental health. Thus, from the beginning, research on self-disclosure was firmly based in clinical values.

The initial interest in sex differences in self-disclosure came from this clinical perspective. Jourard argued that research in self-disclosure points to "lethal" aspects of the male role.[6] In several of Jourard's early studies males reported less disclosure than females.[7] By taking self-disclosure as an index of openness, of "real-self being," and assuming that these are factors in health and wellness, Jourard concluded that the traditional male role is inherently unhealthy.

More recently, self-disclosure has been viewed as a critical ingredient in relational development theory. According to developmental theorists and researchers, self-disclosure functions to negotiate relationship escalation and de-escalation.[8] In developmental theories, self-disclosure is viewed as a kind of currency, whereby relational development proceeds through the process of trading currency as partners share or withhold personal experiences, secrets, and intimacies.

Research supports these contentions, indicating a positive linear relationship between amount, intimacy, riskiness, and reciprocity of disclosure and stage of relationship.[9] While some evidence suggests a curvilinear rela-

tionship between disclosure and relationship stage (i.e., less intimacy in initial and advanced than in middle stages),[10] most evidence indicates that people do regulate relationship development through selective self-disclosure.[11]

When researchers have considered sex of discloser as a factor in that relationship between disclosure and stage of relationship, results were less straightforward. The linear relationship is apparently more indicative of females' disclosures than of disclosure by males.[12] Further, there is mounting evidence that males and females interpret self-disclosure differently, perhaps having different values for disclosure currency.[13] For example, consider the following findings. Males tend to make disclosures earlier in relationships than do females.[14] Avoidance of disclosure by men occurs in order to maintain control, while females avoid disclosure in order to avoid personal hurt and relational problems.[15] Further, males and females differ in their ratings of the intimacy of various topics.[16] In addition to their own differing interpretations, the same disclosure by males and females may generally be interpreted differently by others. Females are assumed to be more open than males,[17] and are liked more when they disclose at a high level while the opposite is true for males.[18]

Thus, both the clinical and the relational development perspectives point to the importance of understanding the roles that sex and gender play in disclosure processes.

RESEARCH ON SEX, GENDER, AND SELF-DISCLOSURE

Theorists and researchers interested in sex differences in human communication have found a need to distinguish between biological sex and psychological sex (learned gender roles). Most research on sex differences in self-disclosure has been in the former area.

Biological Sex

Sex of discloser. Early research consistently showed that men reported more disclosure than women. However, after more than two decades of intensive research, the results are less clear. A large number of studies tested for possible sex differences in self-disclosure. While more than half of these were based on self-report measures, whose validity has been questioned, the results of the behavioral research do not differ significantly from those of the self-report studies. This author found 28 self-report studies with nonsignificant results.[19] In 21 studies females reported more disclosure than males, and in only 1 study was the reverse true.[20] On the other hand 19 behavioral studies reported nonsignificant results,[21] while in 21 studies females disclosed more than males,[22] and in 6 studies the reverse was true.[23] Although Bochner argued that self-report and behavioral studies of self-disclosure should be considered separately,[24] a Chi-square statistic comparing the distributions of the above self-report and behavioral studies failed to achieve statistical significance ($\chi = 5.14$, $df = 2$, $p < .10$).[25]

Few studies have addressed sex differences in the control dimension of disclosure. In using a self-report measure of control of disclosure developed by Wheeless,[26] Tardy, Hosman, and Bradac found that sex of respondent did not influence disclosure control. However, the results of a behavioral study differ.[27] Measures of reciprocity in studies by Davis can be construed as measures of control.[28] In Davis' studies reciprocity is an index of the "following" of the level of the partner's intimacy. To the extent that a person follows, he/she yields control of the intimacy level for self and for the dyad; to the extent that a person proceeds independently of the partner's intimacy level, he/she controls the disclosure level. Davis' results indicate that in male-female dyads, females reciprocated more than did males; that is males

tended to control their own and their partners' intimacy level more than vice-versa.[29]

Sex of interaction partner. Compared to studies of the effects of the sex of the discloser, results of studies considering the sex of the interaction partner were clearer. In 8 studies, females reportedly received more disclosure than male targets.[30] In 7 behavioral studies, females received more disclosure than did males.[31] In 4 behavioral studies, partner sex did not influence disclosure,[32] and in 1 study males received more disclosure than females.[33] Here again, the distributions of results by self-report and behavioral studies failed to yield a significant Chi-square ($\chi = 4.44$, $df = 2$, $p > .10$).[34]

Interaction between sex of discloser and sex of partner. Investigations reporting an interaction of the sex of the discloser and the sex of the interaction partner indicate the importance of considering sex as a dyadic variable, rather than simply the sex of one of the partners. In a variety of self-report studies, several authors indicate that generally, more disclosure is directed to females by females than by males, and more disclosure is directed by males to male friends than by females.[35] In the behavioral studies, results were less clear. Two studies reported more self-disclosure to same-sex partners than to opposite sex partners[36] while another found the opposite results.[37]

The fact that people sometimes make adjustments in their disclosure reports and behaviors on the basis of the sex of their interaction partner, and the interaction of their own sex with that of their partner's, suggests that this behavior is largely a product of learning, of socialization, rather than determined by innate characteristics. The findings point to the importance of considering psychological sex or gender roles when investigating self-disclosure.

Psychological Sex

While traditional research investigating sex as a factor in communication has viewed sex solely as a biological matter, researchers are increasingly concerned with learned or socialized behaviors rather than innate biological characteristics. As Birdwhistell wrote, "There has been . . . an increasing realization that intragender and intergender behavior throughout the animal kingdom is not simply a response to instinctual mechanisms but is shaped, structured, and released both by the ontogenetic experiences of the participating organisms and by the patterned circumstances of the relevant environment."[38] Birdwhistell thus argued for the distinction between primary, secondary, and tertiary sexual characteristics. He contrasted physiological differences, primarily reproductive in nature (primary) with learned and situationally produced behaviors (tertiary). Increasingly those distinctions are actualized through differential use of the terms "sex" and "gender."[39]

Bem is responsible for developing initial methods for conducting research on psychological sex or gender.[40] She conceptualized gender in terms of combinations of stereotypic masculine and feminine characteristics. The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) consists of a checklist of 60 adjectives, 20 each for masculine, feminine, and socially desirable characteristics. The measure permits classification of respondents into four gender types: masculine, those high on masculinity but low on feminity, feminine, those high on femininity but low on masculinity, androgynous, those high on both dimensions, and undifferentiated, those low on both dimensions.

Three studies used the BSRI to investigate the effects of gender on self-disclosure. (Note: All three relied on self-report measures of self-disclosure.) All three supported the contention that androgynous types disclose more than other gender types. Stokes, Childs, and Fuehrer found that high

masculinity was indicated for high disclosure to acquaintances and strangers while those who reportedly disclosed at high levels to intimates were high on both the masculinity and femininity dimensions of the BSRI.[41] In Pearson's study, masculine females disclosed more than did feminine females and feminine males disclosed more than masculine males; here too the results seem to indicate that both masculinity and femininity, in some combination (biological/psychological) are necessary for high disclosure.[42] Greenblatt, Hasenauer, and Freimuth supported the above findings but also considered the impact of biological sex on disclosure; because their data was organized in terms of opposite-sex and same-sex partners rather than sex of the interaction partner, and because specific apriori hypotheses were tested, they failed to report results for possible interactions among sex of discloser, sex of interaction partner, and gender type of discloser.[43]

The review of self-disclosure and sex and gender issues suggests the following research questions:

1. What are the effects of sex and gender of discloser and sex of partner on reported self-disclosure intimacy?
2. What are the effects of sex and gender of discloser and sex of partner on reported control of self-disclosure?
3. What are the effects of sex and gender of discloser and sex of partner on behavioral self-disclosure intimacy?
4. What are the effects of sex and gender of discloser and sex of partner on behavioral control of self-disclosure?

SELF-REPORT AND BEHAVIORAL MEASUREMENT OF SELF-DISCLOSURE

Early measurement of self-disclosure was primarily by the use of target-topic self-report measures.[44] Jourard's first measure consisted of a list of 60 topics; instructions specified the targets that the respondents should use

in answering the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they had disclosed on each topic to the particular target. The sum of the ratings constituted the self-disclosure score. Jourard's form of measurement has been imitated by many others who developed alternative target-topic measures;[45] some used Taylor and Altman's extensive list of topics pre-rated for intimacy value.[46]

As research on self-disclosure increased in volume, theorists and researchers recognized the multi-dimensional nature of disclosure; in addition to an emerging variety of other self-report measures, Chelune and Wheeless and Grotz developed self-report measures of disclosure which tap multiple dimensions of disclosure, including amount, depth, flexibility, and control.[47]

The Validity of Self-Report Measures

Studies of the validity of self-report measures suggest that asking respondents to generalize across situations and across general topics produces measurement problems.[48] Results of various attempts to relate self-disclosure reports to actual disclosure behavior verified the validity problem, particularly for target-topic measures. Self-reported disclosure was found minimally related to a variety of behavioral measures of self-disclosure, including intimacy,[49] amount of self-disclosure,[50] talk time,[51] self-disclosure ratings by peers and professionals,[52] and past and present behavior.[53]

Sex and Measurement of Disclosure

While the validity of self-report measures of disclosure is questionable, some variance may be due to the sex of the respondent and thus may be interfering with the apparent validity of those measures. For instance, Davis and Sloan found that although males rated themselves more disclosing than did females, no actual behavioral differences existed.[54] Sermat and Smyth (1973) found that males disclosed on fewer intimate items than did females although

males reported more intimacy than did the female respondents.[55] Using retrospective measures, Colwill and Perlman found that females reported more disclosure than did males but independent raters found no differences in their behaviors.[56] Chelune's results indicate a positive relationship between response on his Self-Disclosure Situation Survey and verbal behavior for females, but a negative relationship for males. Taken compositely, these results suggest that the sex of the respondent may be a variable on which the validity of self-report measures differs. The following research questions are suggested:

5. How do self-report and behavioral measures of disclosure intimacy relate to each other?
6. How do self-report and behavioral measures of disclosure control relate to each other?
7. What is the impact of sex and of gender on those relationships?

METHODS

In order to address the stated research questions, separate studies of self-disclosure reports and behaviors were conducted, using the same participants.

Participants

Participants in the studies were 102 males and 194 females in a basic interpersonal communication course at a large eastern university. Self-report data is reported for all participants who fully completed the three questionnaires used in the study. All participants completed the behavioral portion of the study.

Self-Report Study

The self-report study addressed research questions 1 and 2.

Measures. In conjunction with gathering demographic data about the course's population, students were asked to complete several paper-pencil

tests. The questionnaires were placed in a randomized order. Students completed the questionnaires during the first week of the course so that course content could not influence their responses.

Students completed the following measures: the Bem Sex Role Inventory,[58] a 21-item target-topic Self-Disclosure Questionnaire developed by Jourard,[59] and the revised subscale for measuring control of self-disclosure developed by Wheeless.[60]

In completing the Bem Sex Role Inventory, respondents were asked to rate themselves on the extent to which each item applied to him/herself on a scale from 1-7. The 20 masculinity and the 20 femininity items scores were totalled and averaged for each respondent. From the total sample, 100 males and 100 females were selected randomly in order to determine the median for each of the two subscales. The median for the masculinity subscale was 5.11. The median for the femininity subscale was 4.94. The split-median method was used to classify respondents into gender types.[61] Several studies support the independence of the two subscales.[62] Reported test-retest reliabilities are .90 for masculinity and .90 for femininity. The measure displays internal consistency as well; coefficient alphas of .86 for masculinity and .60 for femininity were reported by Bem.[64] Detailed support for the reliability and validity of the measure is reported by Beere.[65]

The 21-item Jourard Self-Disclosure Questionnaire consists of a list of topics in the form of questions.[66] Respondents were asked to rate each topic according to how willing they would be to reveal the information asked for by the question to a new acquaintance, someone with whom they were in initial stages of a relationship. The rating scale was from 0 (not willing to reveal anything) to 5 (willing to reveal everything). The targets specified were same and opposite sex acquaintances. Responses were summed to create a disclo-

sure score for each target and those two scores were summed to create a total disclosure score. Although reliability and validity information are reported by Jourard, the validity of this type of measure has been questioned by a multitude of studies.[67]

The control of self-disclosure subscale developed by Wheeless consists of 6 items; respondents rated each item on a 7 point scale.[68] The target specified was "a new acquaintance." The sex of the partner was not indicated. Wheeless reported the factor reliability for control of disclosure to be .79.[69] Previous research indicated that this factor was independent or minimally correlated with other disclosure dimensions.[70] The scale has not previously been behaviorally validated.

Design and analysis. The design for the study of self-reported intimacy of disclosure contained three factors: two independent factors (sex of respondent and gender of respondent) and one repeated measure (sex of the interaction partner). The Biomedical Computer Program, P-Series (BMDP) statistical package for mixed-models analysis of variance was used to analyze the data.[71] The design for reported control of self-disclosure consisted of two independent factors: sex of respondent and gender of respondent. (Note: sex of partner was not specified nor varied.) The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program for two-factor analysis of variance was used to analyze the data.[72] In computing followup independent t-tests, the Behrens-Fisher t was used to compensate for unequal n's; this test is also robust for unequal variances.[73] Where this test was used, degrees of freedom were adjusted using Welch's solution.[74] Alpha was set at .01 for all tests; in addition, the criterion of reaching at least a small effect size, as defined by Cohen, was met prior to interpreting any results.[75]

Behavioral Study

The behavioral study addressed research questions 3 and 4.

Measures. As a class assignment, students were instructed to participate in the Davis Acquaintance Exercise during the third week of the course.[76] They were told to select partners within the class that they did not know and to meet outside of class at an agreed upon time to complete the exercise. Because acquainting does not usually occur on a random basis, but rather on the basis of mutual selection, this method of creating dyads seemed consistent with "real life," helping to retain external validity. The pairings resulted in 21 male-male dyads, 67 female-female dyads, and 60 male-female dyads. Partners were provided with a sealed envelope containing the instructions for the exercise. They were informed that they should allot approximately 40 minutes to complete the exercise. Furtner, they were instructed that the exercise and the general results would be discussed later in the course. The exercise is described in detail by Davis. The exercise contains a list of 72 items taken from Taylor and Altman's list of items prerated for intimacy.[77] Since 15 years had elapsed since the rating of those items, a pilot study was completed in order to establish more current and localized values.[78] In the exercise, partners flip a coin to determine who will go first in a series of 12 rounds of turntaking in which, first one partner, then the other, chooses a topic from the list and talks on it for one minute; the listening partner is not permitted to respond to the content of the disclosure. Participants reported their choices on a recording sheet. Intimacy of disclosure scores were obtained for each participant by adding the intimacy values of the 12 chosen items. A reciprocity index was computed; it is used here as a measure of control, indicating the extent to which the person followed or proceeded independently of the intimacy level set by his/her partner in previous turns. For $Partner_1$, the reciprocity index was the correlation between

Partner$_1$'s selections on turns 2-12 and Partner$_2$'s selections on turns 1-11. For Partner$_2$, the reciprocity index was the correlation between his/her selections on turns 1-12 and Partner$_1$'s selections on turns 1-12. The computed values were normalized by an r-to-z transformation. Davis' results provide some support for the validity of the measures.[80]

Design and analysis. For both intimacy and reciprocity of disclosure, the design consisted of three independent factors: sex of participant, gender of participant, and sex of partner.

Analysis of variance was conducted using the SPSS statistical package for a three factor design.[81] The criteria for determining statistical significance were the same as for the self-report study.

Relationships Between Measures

In order to address research questions 5-7, Pearson-product moment correlations were computed between self-report and behavioral measures. Overall correlations, as well as correlations broken down by sex of respondent and partner, and gender of respondent, as appropriate, were considered.

RESULTS

Self-Report Study

Intimacy. The results of the analysis of variance for reported disclosure intimacy are reported in Table 1.

Enter Table 1 about here

While sex and gender of participant and sex of partner failed to achieve significant main effects, the F test for the sex of respondent by sex of partner interaction was statistically significant ($F = 16.22$, $df = 1$, $p = .0001$). Followup tests were conducted to determine the specific differences within the data. The results of these tests are summarized in Table 2.

Enter Table 2 about here

Specifically, males reported greater disclosure to males than did females and males reported greater disclosure to male than to female partners. The results also indicate that females reported greater disclosure to female than to male partners. These results are consistent with previous research in which respondents generally reported more disclosure to same-sex than to opposite-sex targets.

Control. The analysis of variance for reported control of self-disclosure failed to yield any significant F-tests. The answer to research question 2 is that sex of respondent, gender of respondent, and the interaction of the two failed to affect reported control of disclosure.

Behavioral Study

Intimacy of disclosure. Results of the analysis of variance for behavioral intimacy of disclosure are summarized in Table 3.

Enter Table 3 about here

The only significant F-test was for sex of participant. The response to research question 3 is that sex of partner and gender of participant failed to impact behavioral intimacy of disclosure. However, the Behren's Fisher t-test for sex of participant was computed ($t = 5.28$, $df = 220.36$, $p < .001$) and indicated that females disclosed more intimately than males. The test resulted in a small effect size ($r = .15$).

Reciprocity of disclosure. Results of the analysis of variance for reciprocity of disclosure indicated that sex of participant, gender of participant, sex of partner, and the interactions of these variables did not explain the results. None of the F-tests were statistically significant.

Relationships Between Self-Report and Behavioral Measures

Pearson-product moment correlations were computed between self-report and behavioral measures of self-disclosure. The correlation for intimacy was .006 ($df = 269$, $p = .92$). The correlation for the control measures was -.02 ($df = 271$, $p = .72$). The correlations indicate that virtually no relationship exists between the self-report and behavior measures when the sample is mixed with regard to sex and gender of respondent, and sex of partner. (Scattergrams indicated that the relationships were random rather than curvilinear.) Tables 4 and 5 report correlations between measures when consideration is given to these variables.

Enter Tables 4 and 5 about here

Results indicate that for some groups there is at least a small to moderate relationship between self-reported and behavioral indices of self disclosure. Females' reported total disclosure (sum of reports for same and opposite sex partners) are positively related to actual behavioral intimacy ($r = .23$, $p = .002$), but males' total reported disclosure intimacy is unrelated to actual behavioral intimacy. For females, when the sex of the partner is accounted for, the relationships among the measures are even stronger: .36 for male partners ($p = .006$) and .27 for female partners ($p = .003$). For males, the relationship between the measures is stronger with female partners ($r = .22$, $p = .12$) than with male partners, but still failed to achieve statistical significance. Although the statistically significant correlations cited above achieve at least a small effect size, they fail to meet generally agreed upon standards for construct (convergent) validation. See Anastasi and Bohrnstedt for discussions of validity coefficient standards.[82] For the control of self-disclosure measures, a negative correlation indicates a positive relationship among the measures, since reciprocity actually measures "following," the yielding of control rather than the maintain-

ing of control. None of the computed correlations achieved significance by the standards specified in this study.

DISCUSSION

The present studies investigated the role of sex and gender of participant, and sex of partner on self-disclosure intimacy and control of disclosure. Separate self-report and behavioral studies were completed on the same sample of participants so that the relationships among report and behavioral measures could be assessed.

For reported intimacy, an interaction between sex of respondent and sex of partner was found. Followup tests indicated that most disclosure was reported by males with male partners, followed by males with female partners and females with female partners; least disclosure was reported for females with female partners. However, when behavioral intimacy was assessed, only the sex of the participant was a significant factor in determining intimacy. Behavioral results indicated that females disclosed more than males. These results point to two important conclusions and considerations for future research.

(1) Males and females perceive disclosure intimacy in different terms. Females' reports corresponded more closely with their actual behaviors than did males'. Two explanations are possible. This could be another case in which males simply over-estimate their performance; because the acquaintance exercise and the self-reports occurred in the context of an interpersonal communication course, students may have assumed that self-disclosure was necessarily valuable and that they should try to achieve high disclosure. As such, the environment in which the study took place may have created social desirability effects. If so, it is not surprising that males "overreported" their disclosure; several other investigations indicate that males tend to overestimate their performance level.[83]

An alternative or concurrent explanation is that males and females simply do not see the same disclosure content as having the same intimacy value. Research cited earlier in this report indicates that perceptions of disclosure differ for the sexes. Future research ought to focus on the interpretations or perceptions of the disclosure in conjunction with the actual behaviors. In this study pre-rated intimacy values were used; future research could focus on the values held by the specific and individual participants in the research. Thus both behaviors and perceptions, and the relationships among those, could be considered in interpreting the results. Communication consists of both behavior and the experiencing of that behavior but little interpersonal communication research considers both of the factors, particularly in a dyadic context.[84]

(2) There may be a small, but consistent, difference in the intimacy of disclosure by males and females. The difference is assumed small since the difference found here accounted for only 2% of the variance, and because there has been a tendency in both reported and behavioral studies for results to be split between nonsignificance and those which indicate that females disclose more intimately than males. Additionally, results here and elsewhere point to the importance of measuring various dimensions of self-disclosure independently. In much previous research, amount and intimacy have been confounded. When self-disclosure is measured in terms of amount of talk, the results are clearly different than when intimacy dimension is focused upon. In fully half of the studies in which males were found to disclose more than females, the criterion measures were actually amount of talk or words;[85] other research supports this finding as well.[86]

Although the difference is small, it may still be important. Differences in intimacy of disclosure do not occur in isolation but rather are couched in the context of many other language differences between the sexes. For example, males and females differ in their use of interruptions and silence, selection of topics,

and use of humor.[87] As a result, the difference in self-disclosure may be perceived as larger than it actually is, a kind of halo effect. That halo effect may account for conclusions in the popular literature which consistently view the disclosure of men and women differently.[88] For reported and behavioral control, there were no significant differences due to sex and gender factors. Previous research indicates that in male-female relationships, males tend to take the lead in establishing intimacy levels and females follow. An informal review of the data here suggests that these results may be consistent with those of Davis.[89] However, Davis' research is from a different culture and he used intimacy values established in 1966 by Taylor and Altman.[90] Certainly more attention is needed to this topic within the United States and with updated intimacy values.

The matter of control also does not fall in isolation. Indeed, in male-female relationships there is a consistent taking of control by males and that taking of control is couched within a complex system of communication behaviors. Males consistently tend to communicate in controlling, and females in yielding, manner, resulting in high and low status positions relative to each other.[91] A small difference in control could be an important one.

The lack of differences due to gender type is puzzling, given the results of previous research. However, Greenblatt, Hasenauer, and Freimuth tested paired comparisons rather than conducting a complete analysis of variance,[92] so some of the specific differences they found (or others) may have existed within the present data. Upon initially meeting another person, we cannot accurately assess that person's gender type, so logically, sex of partner seems likely to interact with gender of discloser in influencing self-disclosure. That is, one behaves according to his/her own gender rather than his/her sex, and responds to the other's sex (initially) rather than the unknown gender-type.

The gender by sex of partner interaction was not significant, for any of the tests in the present studies, but did approach significance for behavioral control (reciprocity) ($p = .05$). Additional research may clarify these results. Further, some of the recently criticized weaknesses in the Bem measure may account for the lack of differences.[93] Revisions in the measure suggested by those critics should be used in future research.

A large number of studies have suggested that self-report measures of self-disclosure are not valid when compared to behavioral measures. The general results of the present research support that conclusion. However, the present research went beyond generalized correlations, breaking the data down by sex and gender of respondent and sex of partner. Results indicate that the self-report measure of intimacy is related to behavior for some groups within the larger sample. Present results can only hint at the possibility of sex and gender effects on self-reported control of disclosure, due to small n's. Because some of the correlations do approach significance, further validation attempts are suggested (particularly for masculine males with male partners, feminine males, and feminine females with female partners). The fact that self-report measures may vary in validity on the basis of sex and gender may help to account for the lack of clear conclusions regarding sex differences in self-disclosure. Future research on sex differences needs to consider gender and sex of partner in testing for differences and in assessing measures.

A limitation of the present study is the treatment of self-disclosure as an individual trait and behavior. Obviously, disclosure occurs in the context of a dyadic communication system. Research by Davis provides scholars with relational approaches and relational measures for the study of self-disclosure. Since the interest in self-disclosure among communication scholars occurs largely from relational development and relational communication perspecitves, the use of these relational measures should be helpful in further theory building and testing.

Footnotes

[1]For example, see B. W. Eakins and R. G. Eakins, Sex Differences in Human Communication (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978); N. M. Henley, Body Politics (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1977).

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Table 1

Summary of the Analyses of Variance for Self-Reported Intimacy

Source	Mean Squares	df	F	p
Sex	1821.27	1	1.54	.22
Gender	530.46	3	.45	.72
Sex x Gender	490.87	3	.42	.74
Error	1179.15	288		
Partner Sex	24.80	1	.67	.42
Partner Sex x Sex	603.56	1	16.22	.0001
Partner Sex x Gender	17.77	3	.48	.70
Partner Sex x Sex x Gender	15.60	3	.42	.74
Error	37.21	288		

Table 2

Followup Tests for Self-Reported Intimacy: Sex of Respondent x Sex of Partner Interaction

Test	Mean	Difference	Obtained t-statistic	df	p	r
Male with Female Partner	63.83	5.72	2.30*	171.93	.023	.17[S]
vs.						
Female with Female Partner	58.11					
Male with Male Partner	65.92	10.52	4.45*	174.51	<.001	.16[S]
vs.						
Female with Male Partner	55.40					
Male with Male Partner	65.92	2.09	2.85	89	.005	.17[S]
vs.						
Male with Female Partner	63.83					
Female with Male Partner	55.38	2.73	3.74	180	<.001	.14[S]
vs.						
Female with Female Partner	58.11					

*Behrens-Fisher t; degrees of freedom were adjusted.

[S]Small effect size

Table 3

Summary of the Analyses of Variance for Behavioral Intimacy

Source	Mean Squares	df	F	p
Sex	1484.63	1	28.99	<.001
Gender	222.05	3	1.45	.23
Partner Sex	113.53	1	2.22	.14
Sex x Gender	183.39	3	1.19	.31
Sex x Partner Sex	47.65	1	.93	.34
Gender x Partner Sex	411.20	3	2.68	.05
Sex x Gender x Partner Sex	265.89	3	1.73	.16
Error	14,337.73	280		

Table 4

Pearson-Product-Moment Correlations Between Self-Report and Behavioral Measures of Self-Disclosure Intimacy

Respondents	r	n	p
Males*	-.10[s]	91	n.s.
With Male Partners	.05	38	n.s.
Masculine**	-.03	17	n.s.
Feminine	.40[m]	5	n.s.
Androgynous	.20[s]	8	n.s.
Undifferentiated	-.40[m]	8	n.s.
With Female Partners	.22[s]	52	n.s.
Masculine	.28[s]	17	n.s.
Feminine	.68[l]	9	<.05
Androgynous	-.38[m]	9	n.s.
Undifferentiated	.26[s]	17	n.s.
Females*	.23[s]	180	.002
With Male Partners	.36[m]	58	.006
Masculine	.57[m]	6	n.s.
Feminine	.07	22	n.s.
Androgynous	.60[l]	16	<.02
Undifferentiated	.52[l]	14	<.10
With Female Partners	.27[s]	123	.003
Masculine	.23[s]	22	n.s.
Feminine	-.04	42	n.s.
Androgynous	-.04	23	n.s.
Undifferentiated	.59[m]	36	<.01

[s] Small effect size
[m] Medium effect size
[l] Large effect size

* Total reported disclosure score was used to compute r.

** Refer to gender of respondent.

Table 5

Pearson-Product-Moment Correlations Between Self-Reported and Behavioral Measures of Control of Self-Disclosure

Respondents	r	n	p
Males	-.06	92	n.s.
With Male Partners*	-.18[s]	38	n.s.
Masculine**	-.41[m]	15	p < .15
Feminine	-.28[s]	6	n.s.
Androgynous	.01	8	n.s.
Undifferentiated	.20[s]	9	n.s.
With Female Partners	.05	54	n.s.
Masculine	.10[s]	16	n.s.
Feminine	-.22[s]	9	n.s.
Androgynous	.18[s]	12	n.s.
Undifferentiated	.20[s]	17	n.s.
Females	.003	181	n.s.
With Male Partners	-.07	54	n.s.
Masculine	.12[s]	5	n.s.
Feminine	.07	22	n.s.
Androgynous	-.35[m]	13	n.s.
Undifferentiated	-.08	14	n.s.
With Female Partners	-.02	127	n.s.
Masculine	-.06	23	n.s.
Feminine	-.36[m]	43	n.s.
Androgynous	.17[s]	26	p < .02
Undifferentiated	.04	34	n.s.

[s] Small effect size

[m] Medium effect size

* Refers to sex of partner in acquaintance exercise.

** Refers to gender of respondent.